

Remarks at a United States-Vietnamese Business Forum Reception in
Ho Chi Minh City
November 19, 2000

Thank you very much. First, thank you for your warm welcome, Mr. Chairman. And let me thank all the members of the Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council, U.S.-ASEAN Business Council, and the American Chamber of Commerce for bringing us all together today.

I am honored to be here with distinguished Members of the United States Congress and my Cabinet and administration and American business leaders who are interested in Vietnam.

I hope this trip has helped the American people to see Vietnam in a new way and has encouraged the people of Vietnam to see America in a new way, so that we will have a partnership for the future.

One important element of that partnership is our bilateral trade agreement, and I want to thank all of you here for your efforts to bring it about. There are so many Americans who want to play a positive role in Vietnam's future, including one million Americans of Vietnamese heritage.

There are also a lot of American business people who came here many years ago, during the conflict—people like Jim Kimsey, who is on my trip here—who have done very well in

the high-tech economy and other areas, who would like to give back to Vietnam and do something positive to build a better future.

I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the work that you have done here in Ho Chi Minh City to promote private economic growth and to encourage others to be partners with you in the future. And I hope that all of us will be able to celebrate that kind of future because of your leadership and the policies of the Government of Vietnam and the willingness of the people of Vietnam to support this new direction.

Again, let me thank all of you for making my family and my delegation feel so welcome in Vietnam. I thank you for your vision for this young and dynamic country, and I am going home determined to continue the partnership we have for a better future for the people of Vietnam, the people of the United States, and all those whom we can reach together.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:53 p.m. at city hall. In his remarks, he referred to Vo Viet Thanh, chairman, Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee; and James V. Kimsey, founder, America OnLine.

Statement on the Appointment of Donna Shalala as President of the
University of Miami
November 19, 2000

I congratulate Secretary Shalala on her appointment as president of the University of Miami, a post she will assume on June 1. She is a talented manager and an energetic leader who will bring great experience to the task of leading the university, its students, its faculty, and its alumni. I have no doubt she will be a real asset to the university and its community.

For almost 8 years, Secretary Shalala has led the Department of Health and Human Services with vigor and skill, always focused on meeting the needs of the American people. During her tenure as the longest serving Secretary in the

history of the Department, she has directed the welfare reform process; made health insurance available to 2.5 million children through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP); raised immunization rates to the highest levels in history; and led major reforms of FDA's drug approval process and food safety system.

As a Medicare trustee, she helped extend the solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund, directing management reforms and launching a campaign against waste, fraud, and abuse in the Medicare and Medicaid programs that has already paid

enormous dividends. She has strengthened the scientific leadership and budget of the National Institutes of Health, and she has reinvigorated the Federal role in public health.

I am also pleased that Secretary Shalala intends to complete her term, staying through January 20 to finish the work we have to do for

the American people. I look forward to working with her to protect the privacy of medical records and to win congressional approval of a budget that increases our investment in biomedical research and other critical public health priorities as well as health insurance coverage to the uninsured.

Interview With John King of CNN in Ho Chi Minh City November 19, 2000

New Vietnam-U.S. Relationship

Mr. King. Thank you for joining us. We're here in Ho Chi Minh City with the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, this, the last day of his landmark trip here to Vietnam.

First, sir, thank you for joining us.

The facts speak for themselves. The first U.S. President to visit Vietnam since the end of the war, the first ever to set foot in Hanoi, the Capital.

Interested in your thoughts. You've called this a new chapter, turning the page in the relationship. What is it do you think it will mean, first for the people of Vietnam, and also for the people of the United States?

The President. Well, of course, I hope it means for the people of Vietnam continued openness and continued prosperity. This country has made a lot of progress in the last few years. The economy is diversifying. It's becoming more open to the rest of the world. Sixty percent of the people are under 30 years old. Most of them have no memory at all of the war, and they are very much oriented toward the future. They are asking themselves all kinds of fundamental questions about what the world is like now, how they're going to relate to it, what their country should be. So I hope that we have opened a new chapter, and I hope it will be good for them and good for us.

Mr. King. Now obviously, part of the new chapter is a widely expanded economic relationship. Do you have much confidence it will go beyond that, at least in the short term? After your meeting yesterday with the leader of the Communist Party here, he referred to the United States in a daily newspaper as imperialists, said that he hoped there would be respect for the different way of doing things here.

You mentioned in your speech, nationally televised here to university students, the examples of the United States in the areas of individual freedom, religious freedom, political freedom.

Do you have much confidence that the Government here, as it accepts and embraces a wider economic relationship with the West, will do anything to bring progress on those other fronts?

The President. Well, I think there will be more personal freedoms. You know, I had a roundtable this morning with a lot of young people, and they were asking themselves these same questions. And I believe that as we implement this trade agreement, and then Vietnam moves toward membership in the World Trade Organization, the rule of law will become more important; openness will become more important; there will be a lot more access to the Internet and information of all kinds; and so there will be more freedom.

And the question then becomes, when does it become political freedom, or will the political system try to restrict them more, as has been the case in one or two other countries? The truthful answer is, we don't know where it's going. But I think that the trend toward freedom is virtually irreversible, and these folks are too young; they're too vigorous. And as you can see in the streets, there is a lot of good will toward America here. There's a lot of interest in our country and how we're dealing with a lot of the challenges of the new century. So I believe that the trend is positive.

Now, of course, the political leaders will have their debates, and I had a nice little debate with the General Secretary of the Communist Party here about our country, and I stoutly disputed that we were an imperialist country. We